



## **PORTLAND HARBOR**

**Portland, Oregon**  
December 2000



### **Portland Harbor Added to "Superfund" List**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has added the Portland Harbor site to the National Priorities List (NPL), commonly called the "Superfund" list. The NPL is EPA's list of the nation's most contaminated hazardous waste sites that are targeted for cleanup. EPA made the decision to add Portland Harbor to the NPL after considering comments received during a sixty-day public comment period.

### **What Happens Next?**

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is already working on forty cleanup sites along the banks of the Willamette River, which are also known as upland sites. The work ranges from early stages of investigations to cleanup activities and includes identifying and controlling sources of harbor sediment contamination.

EPA is sending letters to land owners and business operators in the Portland Harbor area who may be responsible for contaminated sediments. The letters will inform these parties of their potential liability and ask them to fund or perform the investigation of the sediment contamination. EPA expects to begin negotiations with some of these potentially responsible parties early next year.

### **How Will the Portland Harbor Superfund Cleanup Be Managed?**

EPA will have the lead on sediment work and DEQ will have the lead on the upland sites. The two agencies are coordinating very closely with six tribal governments and the other natural resource trustees for the site. The trustees are designated by law to act on behalf of the public or tribes to protect and manage natural resources, such as land, air, water, fish, and wildlife. For the

### **Background**

Elevated levels of contaminants are present in a six-mile stretch of the Willamette River from the southern tip of Sauvie Island to Swan Island. The harbor sediments contain pesticides such as DDT, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), heavy metals, and polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (carcinogenic compounds found in petroleum products).

The Lower Willamette is a popular area for recreation, including fishing. The river provides a critical migratory corridor and rearing habitat for salmon and steelhead, including endangered runs of steelhead and chinook. The area holds great importance to tribes as a natural and cultural resource, and the federal government has treaty obligations to protect "usual and customary" tribal uses of the area.

The upland area adjacent to Portland Harbor is highly industrialized, and the river has heavy marine traffic. Possible sources of the harbor contamination include former as well as current operations, such as hazardous waste and petroleum product storage; marine construction; oil gasification operations; wood treating; agricultural chemical production; chlorine production; ship loading, maintenance, and repair; and rail car manufacturing. The potentially responsible parties for the cleanup may include some that no longer have operations in the Portland Harbor area.

In July 2000, Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber concurred with EPA's decision to propose that Portland Harbor be added to the NPL, with the understanding that DEQ and EPA will work together on the cleanup, and that it will be integrated with other state initiatives to restore the health of the river.

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Portland Harbor site, the trustees include the following:

- Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
- Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
- Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon
- Nez Perce Tribe
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- National Marine Fisheries Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Both DEQ and EPA recognize that a successful project will require participation by all of these parties.

### **What Are the Steps in the Cleanup Process?**

EPA will continue to work with all the parties identified above throughout the project, and anticipates working with some of the parties responsible for the contamination to implement the long-term Superfund cleanup process, including the following steps:

- Remedial Investigation (RI)—This detailed study will assess the cause, nature, and extent of the contamination. The study will include evaluating existing information and potentially taking and analyzing new sediment, groundwater, surface water, fish tissue, and other samples. As the investigation proceeds, the site boundaries will be defined. A risk assessment based on the results of the RI will evaluate the human health and environmental risks from the contamination.
- Feasibility Study (FS)—This study will use the information from the RI and the risk assessment to develop options for handling the

contaminated sediments. Together the remedial investigation and feasibility study are called the RI/FS.

- Proposed Plan—This document will describe various cleanup options. EPA and DEQ will work directly with our tribal and trustee partners to develop this plan and will solicit and consider public comments on this plan before making a cleanup decision.
- Record of Decision—This document will describe the cleanup decision that is selected by EPA and concurred on by DEQ after the agencies consider public comments.
- Remedial Design—The design will present detailed technical plans for carrying out the selected cleanup.
- Remedial Action—This phase will consist of the actual cleanup work at the site, which, for example, could include dredging or capping contaminated sediments.
- Operation and Maintenance—This phase will ensure that the cleanup continues to be effective. For example, if contaminated sediments were capped, there could be inspections and sampling to ensure the integrity of the cap.

### **How Can I Get More Information and Become Involved with the Site?**

DEQ and EPA are beginning to plan joint public involvement activities for the project. The agencies will be revising DEQ's Draft Portland Harbor Public Involvement Plan this winter so that it reflects both DEQ and EPA's activities. The public is encouraged to review the draft plan, which is already available on the DEQ web site, and provide suggestions on activities that would encourage public involvement and understanding of the project. EPA and DEQ's Portland Harbor web sites are linked to each other and updated periodically. You can get more information about the project from these web sites and the project contacts at the end of this fact sheet.

## Funds Available

An initial EPA technical assistance grant (TAG) of up to \$50,000 is available to an eligible group whose members may be affected by the Portland Harbor Superfund site. Most of the grant funds must be used for a technical advisor to help the community understand technical information about the site. Only one TAG may be awarded for the site, and EPA expects to select the TAG recipient by next spring. To date, one organization, Willamette Riverkeeper, has expressed interest in the TAG.

**If your group is interested in applying for the TAG, please contact Cindy Colgate at the phone number below.**

## Interested in Meeting with Us?

DEQ, EPA, and others on the project teams are interested in meeting with groups that would like to have more information about the Portland Harbor site. **If you would like project team representatives to meet with your group, please contact Kim Cox or Cindy Colgate at the phone numbers below.**

## More Information

EPA and DEQ want to make sure that you have access to useful information about the Portland Harbor project. Please contact either Cindy Colgate at EPA or Kim Cox at DEQ to let us know how we can provide information that suits your needs.

### For electronic information:

EPA Region 10 web site  
<http://www.epa.gov/r10earth/>  
 Click on "Index," then "P,"  
 and then "Portland Harbor, Oregon."

DEQ Portland Harbor web site  
<http://www.deq.state.or.us/>  
 Click on "Programs,"  
 then "Environmental Cleanup and Spills,"  
 and then "Portland Harbor."

### For technical information:

**Wallace Reid**, EPA Project Manager  
 206-553-1728 or toll-free at 1-800-424-4372  
[reid.wallace@epa.gov](mailto:reid.wallace@epa.gov)

### For general information:

**Cindy Colgate**  
 EPA Community Involvement Coordinator  
 206-553-1815 or toll free at 1-800-424-4372  
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**Kim Cox**  
 DEQ Portland Harbor Project Coordinator  
 503-229-6590  
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To ensure effective communication with everyone, additional services can be made available to persons with disabilities by contacting one of the EPA representatives listed above.



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Portland, Oregon*